



state senator
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Drozda Fights to Protect
Hoosier Children

GOVERNOR DANIELS SIGNS TWO BILLS INTO LAW

As a father of five children, with our newest born last month, I know how important it is to keep our children safe. Indiana children are our most precious responsibility and should receive special attention from the state. I authored several bills that passed this session aimed at protecting Hoosier children.

In 2003, the state's sex and violent offender registry was modernized, including the requirement of a photograph of the offender that could be viewed by the public. Currently, thousands of people who have committed sex crimes or crimes against children are registered with the state. The governor signed into law two bills that I authored protecting Indiana children.

Senate Enrolled Act 164 adds the possession of child pornography to the 14 existing offenses. This is the first time the state has taken a proactive step in protecting children from offenders before a physical crime has been committed.

I also authored SEA 233, which provides that a person is guilty of child solicitation if that person is over the age of 21 and solicits a child between the ages of 14 and 16 years old. The measure updates current law that states that a person over the age of 18 commits child solicitation if they solicit a child under 14 years of age. This measure acknowledges that children between the ages of 14 and 16 targeted by sexual predators need to be protected as well as children under the age of 14 and eliminates the gap in the

law. Statistics show that one out of four children will be solicited for sex on the internet. We must remain vigilant in protecting our children.

This session, we also passed Senate Enrolled Act 529, which reorganizes the Office of the Family and Social Services Administration. This department has been plagued by poor management and other problems. The bill creates the Department of Child Services to handle child support, child protection, adoption and foster services.

Some Hoosier children are at risk for abuse and neglect, and these children deserve the proper attention from the state. This new department will focus only on these effected children and their families.

The General Assembly also passed a balanced, two-year state budget that provides additional funding for child protection. The budget funds the new Department of Child Services and provides money for Independent Living assistance for persons moving off of foster care. It also funds an additional 400 caseworkers for child protection and establishes caseload standards for child protection workers.

Child safety is a never-ending task, and the General Assembly will continue to be vigilant in seeking new ways to protect our children.

Legislature Creates
Dept. of Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the largest and most important industries in Indiana. As one of the nation's leaders in a vast array of agricultural areas, it would probably come as a surprise to most Hoosiers that, prior to this legislative session, our state had no official Department of Agriculture.

Indiana was one of only four states that operated without an official Department of Agriculture.

House Enrolled Act 1008, which I co-sponsored, created the official Indiana Department of Agriculture and consolidates duties that were once scattered across numerous agencies.

The bill costs Indiana taxpayers no additional money. In fact, it actually saves money by merging the 10 separate agriculture boards and commissions into one large department.

The bill also changes who serves as the chief advocate for the agriculture community. Previously, the lieutenant governor automatically served as the state's top agriculture official. While Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman through her leadership has performed wonderfully in this post, we needed someone who's sole job was dedicated to agriculture.

The passage of this bill allows the governor to appoint a Commissioner of Agriculture, and the governor picked **Andy Miller**, who lives in our Senate District 21, to serve as the first Commissioner of Agriculture.

Indiana is one of the nation's top agriculture states. This new law will enable us to take full economic advantage of one of our state's traditional strengths.

Rx FOR INDIANA
IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Governor Mitch Daniels has created "Rx for Indiana," a pharmaceutical patient assistance program which allows lower-income Hoosiers to receive the prescription drugs they need for free or at significantly reduced prices. Since the beginning of the program in early March, more than 37,000 Indiana residents have qualified for the program.

Nearly 60 health care, business, community and consumer groups have joined the governor to help improve Indiana citizens' access to prescription medicine. The Rx for Indiana program was developed to build upon the success of other national programs, as it links patients with information about pharmaceutical assistance programs provided by companies and the state and federal government.

Rx for Indiana provides residents access to information about more than 275 public and private prescription assistance programs that provide more than 1,800 medications. In order to take part in the program, Indiana residents must answer a few short questions to verify eligibility. The resident will then be informed of the pharmaceutical patient assistance programs for which he or she qualifies.

Rx for Indiana can save individuals thousands of dollars per year. Before the establishment of Rx for Indiana, only about one in 10 Hoosiers were taking advantage of the reduced cost medicines available. We hope that with the creation of this program, many more Hoosiers will be able to access the medications they need.

To apply for the Rx for Indiana program, visit www.rxforindiana.com or call toll-free 1-877-793-0765. The Web site is available in Spanish and English, and Spanish-speaking telephone operators are available.

Honoring
America's
Heroes




Photo: Senator Drozda with
Commander Dick McDivitt, American
Legion Post 318 & Byron Gamble,
Adjutant VFW Post 10207. Drozda gave
the keynote address at a ceremony for
Armed Forces Day on May 21.



Sen. Drozda's children from left to right:
Elizabeth, Nicholas, Marie and Colette.
Baby Angelica arrived May 26.



Sen. Drozda with his daughter, Colette, on the Senate floor.

In Defense of Marriage: SJR 7

Senate Joint Resolution 7 seeks to amend the constitution to prevent the courts from defining marriage.

The proposed amendment includes a section that bars courts from interpreting the constitution or any Indiana law as a mandate to grant marital status to unmarried couples or groups.

The court deliberations highlights the importance of beginning the lengthy process to amend the Indiana Constitution as soon as possible. This requires multiple steps. A legislator authors a resolution to put the proposed amendment on the ballot. If the resolution fails on the first try, it's back to the drawing board – an amendment must be approved by two separately elected, consecutive Indiana General Assemblies.



The amendment process has been completed. Both the Senate and House of Representatives have approved the resolution for the first time. Therefore, it must gain the approval of the General Assembly again during the 2007 or 2008 session and then appear as a question on the 2008 general election ballot for voters approval.

Hoosier voters will have the final say when it comes to this issue. Last November, voters in 11 states approved similar amendments across the nation. Indiana legislators acted this year in order to place this decision in the hands of the people.

Rooting Out Voter Fraud

Secure, fair elections are essential to preserving the rights of all Americans

Voting in a fair and credible election is at the heart of American citizenship. It is the Legislature's responsibility to adopt policies that protect our representative democracy by ensuring that each vote cast is valid and legal.

A group of Senate bills were introduced this year to update outmoded election laws, reinforce the integrity of voting absentee and strengthen voters' rights at the polls by ensuring their votes are secure.

Of all the reform initiatives, none may be as critical as Senate Enrolled Act 483.

SEA 483 requires citizens to show government-issued photo identification at the polls before voting. Photo IDs are required for many commonplace circumstances that Americans face every day, like renting a video or obtaining a library card. It only makes sense that a photo ID be required for something as important as voting.

Years ago, poll workers knew the people in their precinct and had no reason to question someone's identity. Now, it is increasingly common for Election Day volunteers to live in another town or city than the one in which they are serving. The voter ID bill gives poll workers a tool to verify a person's identity. Considering recent nationwide voting problems, and some within Indiana, this is a common-sense step to help prevent fraud.

Objections to requiring a photo ID stem from a concern that some voters cannot afford the \$9 fee needed to purchase a state ID card. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles has agreed to grant photo IDs free of charge to those who cannot pay. Residents of state-licensed nursing homes are exempt from showing identification if a polling place is located in the facility where they reside. The bill also protects the rights of those who have a religious objec-

tion to being photographed.

Voters who show up at the polls without identification will be able to fill out a provisional ballot. They then will be required to visit the county clerk or election board's office and show an ID or object on religious grounds. The bill also requires the state of Indiana to mail out notices informing Hoosiers of the new requirements before the next election.

In 2003, the BMV issued 5.6 million driver licenses and 1.4 million state ID cards. It's hard to imagine this legislation having an adverse effect on the vast majority of Hoosiers. The voter ID initiative has been supported publicly by Secretary of State Todd Rokita, Indiana's chief election officer.

In 2003, the BMV issued 5.6 million driver licenses and 1.4 million state ID cards.



This simple change in the rules will inspire more confidence in the election process and in our state government.

Responsible legislators want to protect voters' rights and assure that every vote is counted fairly and equally.



LEFT: Sen. Jeff Drozda testifying before the Senate Appropriations committee on the need for a new court in Howard County. Drozda was successful in the Senate creating a new superior court this session.

SEA 12 — The "Code Adam" program sets a protocol for lost or missing children in certain state buildings. This initiative, on a smaller scale, is similar to the popular and successful "Amber Alert" program. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

HEA 1501 — This bill establishes the position of inspector general, an employee of the governor, who works to weed out corruption. Years of scandal in previous administrations cost the state at least \$25 million; we may never know the full extent of misspending. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

Education Initiatives Successful in 2005

Improving education in Indiana is one of our top priorities in the General Assembly. This year, the state tackled several key issues to improve education while providing a safe environment and the skills necessary to succeed in life.

Currently, state law requires children to be five years old on July 1 of a school year to be eligible to attend kindergarten, making Hoosier children the oldest kindergarten students in the country. This year the General Assembly moved the kindergarten enrollment date to include children who turn five years old no later than August 1 of the 2006-2007 school year. While state law does not require parents to enroll children, children who turn five during the summer months will be welcome in our schools.

Charter schools are state-funded public schools that operate free of many state regulations, but are accountable for their results in the same manner as traditional public schools, as well as by the terms of a charter. They provide new learning opportunities through innovative curriculums and environments.

One bill passed this session creates more funding options for charter schools in order to give them at least a few of the same opportunities afforded to other public schools. State restrictions have precluded charter schools from receiving millions of dollars in federal and state school construction funds. From state to state, charter schools represent many of the higher performing schools in some of the nation's lowest per-



LEFT: Sen. Jeff Drozda with Sheriff Doug Carter & Captain Kevin Jowitt at the governor's bill signing for SEA 164 and SEA 233. Both of Drozda's bills focus on protecting our children from sex predators.

forming districts. We must continue to support these important partners in our collaborative effort to educate our children.

Another important initiative requires students, beginning in 2008-2009, to complete the Core 40 curriculum in order to graduate from high school. This program of study requires no additional credits but rather calls for fewer electives and more math, science and social studies classes to fulfill the 40 credit requirement for graduation. There are exceptions for some students whose parents object and for special education students. The bill also requires that parents be notified when a student is in danger of failing the Core 40 requirements and the graduate qualifying exam (GQE). Institutions of higher education in Indiana will require applicants to complete these Core 40 requirements for admission.

We must give students the tools they need to excel academically and to be well-prepared for whichever path they choose after high school.

Drozda & Daniels Weeding out Corruption

In 2004, newspaper readers across the state saw an extraordinary number of headlines revealing corruption in state government. In fact, years of scandal in previous administrations cost the state at least \$25 million. An appointed state examiner said we may never know the full extent of misspending.

It can be argued that Indiana state government sees no more scandal than any other state government or large business. The difference is that Indiana government, until recently, lacked any oversight whatsoever. And when those embezzled and misspent dollars belong to taxpayers, a lack of accountability is unforgivable.



Sen. Drozda & Gov. Daniels

For almost two years, I have been decrying the lack of oversight in state agencies and carried legislation last year that would have created the office of inspector general. This year, on his first day in office, Gov. Mitch Daniels created by executive order the position of inspector general – a post that 58 federal agencies, 11 states and every branch of the military already have – to provide much-needed accountability. The Legislature, however, made the job permanent and gave the inspector the ability to prosecute the wrongdoings he found. Considering that some states allow the attor-

ney general or even the governor himself to prosecute matters of public corruption, this was not an unreasonable request.

Opposition almost killed the bill early with a walk-out, but a compromise was reached. The amended version allows an appeals court judge to appoint the inspector general or choose an elected county prosecutor as a special prosecutor for such cases. In the end, the most important aspect of the bill is not who prosecutes the wrongdoers; it's that they are prosecuted in the first place.

Since Gov. Daniels created this position, reports to the inspector general's hotline have increased twenty-fold. Compared to the old State Ethics Commission line, the inspector general has opened more than 50 investigations as a result of these reports and one set of charges has been filed.

The majority of state employees are hard-working public servants who deserve recognition. However the inspector general is a strong first step to restoring the integrity of state government, which has been tainted by the work of corrupt employees.

SEA 304 — The role of National Guard members deserves special recognition due to their increased responsibilities. This bill exempts spouses and children of National Guard members killed in state active duty from paying tuition at any state educational institution. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

SEA 76 — This law requires a health care provider to provide a pregnant woman with information regarding the availability of ultrasound imaging and auscultation of heart tones of a fetus before performing an abortion. **PASSED. My vote: YES**

Sen. Drozda had a 100% voting attendance record for the third consecutive year in his first Senate term.